

M I R A B A I
SAINT AND SINGER OF INDIA

BY

ANATH NATH BASU

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anath Nath Basu'.

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

Two shillings and sixpence

M I R A B A I

S A I N T A N D S I N G E R O F I N D I A
H E R L I F E A N D W R I T I N G S

BY

A N A T H N A T H B A S U

LONDON

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD
MUSEUM STREET

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1934

acc.no: 7683.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
PRINTED IN GERMANY

TO
A DEAR FRIEND

P R E F A C E

This book is an attempt to present before the Western reader some gems of mediaeval Indian religious poetry and, even at that, a very small part of it. This branch of Indian literature has not yet attracted the attention it deserves and yet in it are preserved some of the finest expressions of the human soul.

After years of research I published, several years ago, a volume in Bengali containing original poems of Mirabai with their Bengali translation. The following essay on Mirabai and my translation of her poems from the Hindi are based on that earlier publication of mine. In preparing this volume I have had help from many quarters too numerous to be mentioned here. I recall the pleasant days of travelling in the wilderness of Rajputana, the native country of Mirabai, in search of materials which came alike from manuscripts kept in the sacred temples there as well as from the living voice of the people who still sing Mira's Songs and preserve the cherished memory of that poetess, princess and saint of mediaeval India in a living manner. I have also used some of the other published books on the subject besides my own.

This volume does not presume to be an exhaustive work on the subject. It is meant only to be an introduction to this extremely interesting field of Indian literature. The writer will consider his labours amply repaid if it succeeds in arousing some interest in the minds of its readers.

In order to help the understanding of this special type of Indian mystic poetry, which is rather unfamiliar to the western mind, I have tried to explain some of its fundamental concepts in the introduction. I have also added some notes on special terms in the appendix. The reader who wants to pursue the subject further will find, at the end, a bibliography which may help him.

The manuscript of this work was ready several years

ago, but for various reasons it could not be published at that time. Since then I have been busy with other work. In the midst of that I got an offer from a kind friend who has undertaken the difficult task of seeing it through the press and publishing it; and so I have to send it to the press rather hastily. I would have loved to add to it and revise it, for which unfortunately I shall have no time. No one regrets this fact more than I do. I am responsible for all the defects which a careful reader will easily discern in the volume. But the opportunity and time were too precious to be lost. If later I get another opportunity of issuing a second edition of the work, I shall try to remedy these apparent defects.

As I have already mentioned, my debts are too numerous to be acknowledged individually. To all those who have helped me in my work I gratefully offer my thanks. I also take this opportunity of thanking especially my friend, Frau Edith Geheeb, whose kind generosity made the publication of the book possible. I thank also my friends, Profs. P. R. Sen and N. Ray Choudhury of Calcutta, who helped me in preparing the translation and in various other ways.

S. S. Strathnaver
Mediterranean Sea
13th October 1933.

A. N. Basu

The reader will find on page 67 a table indicating correct pronunciation of Indian names.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

A brief sketch of Mirabai's life and philosophy

The cultural history of Mediaeval India has never attracted the attention of scholars to the extent it should have done. There is even the notion in some quarters that, during these centuries India, like Europe, passed through a dark age in her history. But nothing can be further from the truth.

The cultural records of this period, being mostly hidden away in the neglected vernacular literatures of India, were not accessible to the scholars whose attention was mainly rivetted on the Sanskrit and Pali sources, and who cared little, if at all, for the living languages of the people; so they lost sight of the fact, among others, of the great neo-Vaishnavite revival, producing personalities like Ramananda, Kabir, Nanak, Mira, Tulsidas, Dadu, Surdas, and a host of others equally great, who enriched with their gifts of mind and heart and vision, their respective languages and literatures.

It is because we know so little of these men, their lives and works, and care perhaps even less, that, for lack of connecting links, the unity of Indian culture from ancient times to the present day seems to us a myth. A great gap between ancient and modern India stares us in the face, which we know not how to bridge.

But to a careful student who takes the trouble of searching in these neglected fields, these missing links will reveal themselves, and he will see before him a picture of how through these long centuries, India has been slowly unfurling herself, trying to realise herself through her great souls, and meanwhile giving expression to her inner yearnings.

Here we shall simply sketch the life of Mirabai, one of these saints of Mediaeval India. She was a princess as well as a poetess of rare gifts, who has left us her songs

as a spiritual heritage. In these songs are to be found an expression of the same aims and ideals that animate Ramananda, Kabir and others, and which were the dynamic of the life of the time.

Mirabai was a Vaishnava devotee, of what school we do not know, nor does it matter. Her religion taught her complete surrender to the will of the Lord, and she left her palace and all its luxuries, her near and dear ones, in search of her God, whom she eventually found.

Vaishnavism came, as it were, by way of protest against Sankara's negative doctrine of maya (illusion). Ramanuja and other reformers felt that such a philosophy could hardly meet the yearnings of the human soul; and Vaishnavism supplied the personal touch by giving a personal God.

The eternal instinct of the human soul is to love and to be loved. We need, not only knowledge as our guide, but also love as our support. In our worldly life, this love is or should be supplied by our family and social relationships, — mother, father, husband, wife or friend, — on whom we may lavish all the love our little soul is capable of. This secular love Vaishnavism seeks to expand as a religious ideal embracing the Divine Person. The God of Vaishnavism is not at a distance from his devotee, but is, as father, mother, friend, or husband, the Beloved of our individual soul.

And in the Krishna cult it was the last aspect of God as Lover and Beloved that found its fullest expression. Here man begins as the play-mate of God in this world-play, or vilasa as the Vaishnavas call it, and ends by identifying himself with Radha (the beloved of Krishna in the Vaishnava mythology) in a supreme self-surrender.

Mirabai's was the life of a perfect devotee. Her God was Giridhar, a name of Krishna; for whom she lived; for Him she gave up the luxury and ease that was hers for the asking, and became a wandering mendicant; for Him she composed and sang her songs; and unto Him she gave up her life.

Her songs, which are still sung in Gujrat and Rajputana by wandering devotees, express for all women, high-and low-born alike, the yearnings of the human soul for the infinite. They are not the secular love-lyrics; the cry we hear in them is not that for a human lover. Clothed though they are in the language of daily life, and of human relationship, they do not speak of the love of flesh for flesh. At first sight they certainly appear to be highly erotic, and we may wonder how such language can be applied by a perfect devotee to God. But how better to express the longing of the imperfect human heart for the Divine, than in words glowing with human passion at its height? There is, moreover, no room for mistake; for, are not the lives of those who sing thus, in tune with the Infinite, showing behind their burning words the strictest rigour of ascetic restraint in practice?

The story of Mira's life bears this out. But before going into its details, we may note one characteristic of her songs, which differentiates her from the others who sing in the same strain. While Jayadev, Chandidas, Surdas, and others, have clothed their ideal in the Vaishnava symbolism of the love of Radha for Krishna, in the songs of Mira we often find that her soul casts off all adornments of imagery to make a direct appeal to her God. The naive beauty of these songs, apparently so simply, best reveals itself, when they are sung by devotees who have tasted of the love of which Mira sings.

Now let us put together the story of her life, as much of it as can be gathered after all these centuries.

It is well-known how history is everywhere mixed up with tradition, and how difficult it generally is to separate them. The reason is that while, on the one hand, the mass mind is nowhere very critical, the historian, on the other, in the absence of authentic written material, needs must take recourse to tradition, in spite of the danger of losing his way in its tangled growth of fact and imagination. In our country there is a further difficulty.

India has always maintained that the actual details in the life of great devotees are not of so much value as the history of their devotional life preserved in their teachings and sayings. This predilection explains the absence of a chronological history in India before the Mohammedans came, though there are, to be sure, notable exceptions like the *Rajtarangini*.

For this reason all investigation into the story of Mirabai's life and work from a historical standpoint has hitherto proved difficult. Fortunately the researches of the late Munshi Deviprasad and others, in this direction, have done much to clear the way for a historical study.

Mirabai, the daughter of Ratansingh Rathaur, and the granddaughter of Rao Dudaji of Merta, a small principality in Rajputana, was born in 1499 A. D. in Kudki, a village not far from Merta. Merta is now the head-quarters of the pargana (district) named after it in the Jodhpur state. The Rathaur of Merta have always been noted, as much for their noble valour, as for their devotion to Vishnu.

Rao Dudaji was the son of Rao Jodhaji, the founder of Jodhpur and, being the third son, received only a grant of landed estate including Merta. Dudaji had two sons, Biramji and Ratan Singh. Biramji was the father of the famous Jaimal, of Rajput history, who died so valiantly at the siege of Chitaur. Jaimal was the playmate of his cousin, Mira, in her childhood. He was a devoted Vaishnava like many other members of the family.

Mira was brought up amidst this Vaishnava influence, and it is no wonder that it should have fostered and coloured the intense devotion that was hers from her childhood and formed the keynote of her later life. Many stories are still current about the beginning of little Mira's devotional life, of which the following is one.

A bridal procession was passing through the streets by the palace and everyone of the ladies, excepting Mira's mother, went out to have a look at it. Mira sought her mother and found her engaged in the worship of Giridhar,

the family deity. From Mira's lips burst the question: "Mother, where is my bridegroom?" And half in jest, half in earnest, the mother replied: "Here he is!" pointing to the image. Thenceforth, as the story goes, Mira developed a passionate and intense devotion for the deity under this name, of which we find such constant mention in her poems.

When Mira grew up she was married to Kunwar Bhoj, the son of Rana Sanga, and the heir apparent of Mewar. This marriage must have taken place about the year 1515, as Rajput girls are not married very early.

At this stage in the history of Mira's life comes the conflict of tradition with history. Tradition makes her wife of Rana Kumbha of Mewar, and thus takes her back to the middle of the 15th Century. Among the historians, Col. Tod was the first to endorse this mistake, and it was repeated after him by others like Munshi Sivasingh. It then came to be so widely accepted that later historians did not think it necessary to sift the facts for themselves and find out the truth.

Mirabai and Munshi Deviprasad. Munshi Deviprasad, the historian of Jodhpur, was the first to question this, and from a thorough sifting of the materials in the archives of the Rajput princes, he was convinced that Mirabai could not be the wife of Kumbha, but that she was wedded to his grandson, Kumar Bhoj, who came long after him. When once Mira's name was connected with that of Kumbha, a series of stories began to be woven round them, of which, however, no detailed discussion is necessary for our purpose.

But we may accept the tradition that Mira, after her marriage, would not go to her husband's home without Giridhar, her beloved deity; and the image had to be made over to her. The story goes on to say that, on her arrival at her father-in-law's palace, she was asked by her mother-in-law to make her obeisance to the Goddess Durga, the family deity of the Ranas of Mewar, but her Vaishanava bent was too powerful and she refused. On this the Rana was so exasperated that she was confined in a separate

palace and subjected to systematic ill-treatment. How far these statements are to be taken as true it is difficult to say, for they may be the outcome of the prejudice and imagination of some later Vaishnava narrator seeking to extol his own sectarian god.

However that may be, it is a fact that Mira did not have a long married life, which came to an early end with the death of Kumar Bhoj sometime before 1528. Rana Sanga survived his son and died in that year. We do not hear of Mira having any child. After the death of Rana Sanga it appears that there was some apprehension of a civil war raging round his surviving sons till, eventually, after some years, Vikramjit established himself on the throne of Mewar.

Many of Mira's songs speak of her ill-treatment by Vikramjit. After the death of her husband Mira had entirely devoted herself to the worship of her beloved Giridhar, and spent her days in the company of Vaishnava saints and mendicants. These doings Vikramjit could not tolerate. Why should Mirabai, a princess of the royal blood, go forth into the streets in such sorry company? Vikramjit accordingly sent his sister, Udabai, to remonstrate with her, but Mira refused to be persuaded to give up her ways. She was offered all the luxuries of a royal house; but would have none of these trinkets. The conversation between the two women has been preserved in one of Mira's poems.

Then her torment began. Stories are told in this connexion of her supernatural powers, her miraculous escapes from the death designed by her brother-in-law. It is told that Rana gave her a cup of poison, but by her accepting it as Charanamrita (water made holy by the divine touch), it had no effect on her; she was bitten by a cobra sent by Vikramjit, and yet did not die. From all this we may gather this much, that life in the palace had become difficult for Mira. She had heard the call of the Infinite, and had no use for what the royal household had to offer her. She had lost her earthly husband, but in his stead, she had gained her Giridhar. Said she:

No, Rana, I will no longer listen to you,
now that I have my husband, Giridhar!

And, at length, Mira left the palace in quest of her Lord, wandering alone in the wide world, among the lowly and the poor. It is said that after leaving the palace she went to Merta and thence to the banks of the Banas river where she spent some time in meditation. But where was her Lord, for whose sake she had left the palace, renounced her royal state, given up her kith and kin, — where was He to be found?

For thee, have I forsaken all pleasures, —
Why dost thou now keep me waiting?

She had to wait and wait long and weary days, and she lamented:

The Lord of my heart is delaying,
And the clouds of sorrow are enveloping me.

For her Lord was late in coming.

At last her perseverance was rewarded, and her long and weary night was followed by the dawn. In her soul she felt the approach of her Beloved:

I hear the footsteps of Hari!

she sang, and Hari did indeed reveal Himself to Mira. Then was hers the joy of spiritual rebirth, and thenceforth her life was like incense burning in perpetual festival before the altar of her Lord.

Mira then went to Brindaban, where tradition has it that she met Jiva Goswami, one of the leaders of the Gaudiya Vaishnava (the Bengal School of Vaishnavism) movement. We have, however, scarcely any authentic information about the guru of Mira. Some biographers have mentioned Raidas, the saintly cobbler of Gujrat, as her preceptor; but this is doubtful. In the life of Raidas, we find mention of Jhali, a queen of Chitaur, as his disciple. We do not know who this Jhali was. There is no mention of Mira's name in the poems of Raidas, nor is there any

clear mention of Raidas in those poems of Mira which may be taken as authentic. The fact seems to be that, as the songs of both Mira and Raidas are current in Gujerat, some later disciple of Raidas has connected them in order to glorify his own guru.

Anecdotes are current how, before leaving the palace, Mira sought counsel of Tulsidas, the famous author of Ramacharita Manasa, and how, on his advice, she took the final step. The authority for this incident is a song in Tulsidas's Vinayapatrika, which, they say, was addressed to Mira. But this song might as well have been addressed to anyone else. Moreover, to make Mira a contemporary of Tulsidas, would go against the sense of historical chronology. There is also a story about the Emperor Akbar visiting Mira with Tansen, his court singer. This, likewise, is improbable on the same ground.

Mira seems to have stayed sometime in Brindaban. There is a beautiful song, referring to that period, which begins thus:

Make me thy servant, O Lord, make me thy servant;
I would be thy servant and lay out thy garden.

From Brindaban Mira went to Dwarka, now in Kathiawad. The principal Vaishnava deity in this holy place is called Ranchod, — the Krishna who left the battlefield to retire in Dwarka.

Meanwhile Chitaur had come upon evil days. Akbar had besieged the city and Mewar was in danger. The people believed that these calamities were due to the wrath of the Almighty at Mira's leaving the place, owing to her ill treatment. So they wanted her back, and certain Brahmins were deputed to bring her home.

The Brahmins went over to Dwarka and began to entreat her. Mira was in a dilemma. She could neither think of leaving her life of devotion, nor could she refuse the revered messengers. Then, it is said, in order to put an end to her doubts, she went into the temple and began to dance and sing before the Lord. And that was the last

ever seen of her. According to common belief she vanished, having been taken by the Lord unto his bosom.

Her last song before Ranchod is said to have been:

Take me, if thou thinkest me to be pure.

Excepting thee I know none else,

O Lord have mercy on me!

This happened possibly in 1570.

Thus ends the characteristic life story of Mirabai, the most renowned poetess of India in the middle ages, who has lighted a lamp for all time to guide the human soul to mystic lands unseen.

Hear my prayers, All-merciful! I drift along the current of life, save me for pity's sake.

In this wide, wide world I have no one to call my own: Raghuvan* is my only true friend. Father, mother, friends and relations come to me only to satisfy their own interests.

Oh Mira's Lord, hear her prayers, and take her to your feet.

* For this and other terms see glossary at the end.

The name of Narayana is a thing of shame to the people; they have all tabooed it.

To go to the temple of the Lord, well, their legs refuse to carry them so far and they come back. But let there be a quarrel among neighbours, they will forget all their household duties and rush to join it.

Night after night would they spend in seeing the dance of harlots and clowns; but let anyone join saintly company, gossip will pursue him.

Mira's heart she has placed at the feet of her dear Lord Giridhar.

No, Rana, I am no longer going to obey you, now that I have Giridhar for my Lord.

Jewels and camphor, whatever they say, have the same fate, the same end awaits alike the clods of earth and bars of gold.

The richest of the rich is now my refuge — on Him I meditate.

Now that I have taken to communion (with the Lord), where is sorrow? I have my master in the Lord.

My heart finds pleasure in the company of saints, but my relations frown at it. A thousand and one times they try to persuade me, but I will follow my own heart.

I have now made friends with Shyam; the crown on his head gleams with jewels and a priceless necklace hangs on his bosom; the sweet music of his anklet-rings I hear.

I have given up all sense of shame and decency and have found a refuge at His feet.

Ah Mira's Lord Giridhar, take me away, take me away from this sordid world.

J. M. V.

What else have I to do, oh Rana, what else have I to do? I can only hold communion with the Lord.

I do not require, oh Rana, big lakes for my bath, — small pools will do for me. Every morning I shall take an early bath and then hold communion with the Lord.

What would I do, oh Rana, with clothes studded with diamonds? A simple scarf would do me in my wanderings.

Plates of gold I require not for my worship; a simple wreath of tulsi leaves would bring my salvation.

Temple or palace need I none, lowly huts would be enough.

Oh Rana, the Lord of Mira is the beloved Giridhar; I have to take refuge in him only.

My immortal dear, I depend on the singing of thy
praises, I depend on that alone.

Pilgrimage, austerities or meditation I know nothing
of, I go about an Udashi without any attachment.

I know not either the mantras or the systems of
worship. I have not either read the Vedas or gone to
Kashi.

Oh dear Giridhar, the Lord of Mira, I am a servant
of thy feet, so lotus-like and beautiful.

Beloved, let my life be an offering of light to thee.
Let thy praise ring through my heart morning and evening.

I shall make this body the lamp and my mind I shall make the wick. There I shall burn the oil of love and the light will shine day and night.

I shall spread the carpet of knowledge (to sit on) and with devotion I shall decorate (my house). For thee, beloved, I shall dedicate all my wealth and life.

Multi-coloured is this bed (on which I sit) and it is decked with many flowers; but my days pass away counting the stars and my beloved does not come.

The month of Sravana has passed by and Bhadra has now come. The rainy season is here. Dark clouds have covered the sky and showers (of tears of separation) pour down from my eyes.

My parents gave me to thee and thou hast left me. Thou knowest well that beside thee I think of no other love. Thou art my only beloved and real happiness thou alone can give.

Anxious is Mira, make her thine own.

My friends, I am true to my Lord; there is nothing to be ashamed of now, since I have been dancing openly.

Day finds me without hunger and at night I am restless and without sleep. Now I shall leave behind all troubles and go on to the other side; hidden knowledge revealed itself to me.

All my relations have come and surrounded me like swarms of bees. But Mira is the servant of her beloved Giridhar and she cares not, though the people mock her.

Oh Lord of the lowly, seat yourself on the throne
of my heart. I shall never forget you, never.

Mira has left her palace and bedecked with tilak and
sacred paints, with anklets on foot and sitar in hand, she
has come out openly as a Vaishnava.

The mother-in-law and sisters ordered her to bow
her head to the god; but said Mira — there alone will I
bow my head where I shall find out the Lord of the lowly.

My only treasure is the name of Rama and none other have I; yes, no one else and I have ransacked the whole world through.

My brother I have forsaken, and friends and relatives and all the near and dear ones too, and regardless of opinions I spend the days in the company of sadhus; the pious were pleased but the world blushed.

With tears of love I washed off the poison of the tree. I churned the butter out of the sour milk and threw away the refuse.

The Rana sent me a cup of poison and absorbed in love I drank it off.

Now everything is out and known to everybody. Mira clings to Rama, come whatever may.

Make me thy servant, oh Lord, make me thy servant;
I would be thy servant and lay out thy garden.

Daily shall I see thee and through the bowers and
streets of Brindaban shall I sing thy praise.

Thy remembrance and thy sight shall be my reward
for this service and thy love shall be my wealth. All these
three are the best for me.

I shall lay out green plots and here and there in their
midst I shall build bowers; and there dressed in flower I
shall meet my beloved.

The yogi has come to Brindaban for yoga (meditation)
and the ascetic for his austerities. The devotee has come
here to sing the praise of Hari.

Deep and silent is the Lord of Mira. Oh my heart,
be not impatient, in the dead of night your Lord will meet
you on the banks of the river of love.

Now I have but Gopal Giridhar and none else.

In the company of saints I have lost all sense of (false) shame.

It is well known how I have watered with tears the creeper of love. At last it has flowered and given me fruits of nectar.

When I came, the Bhaktas knew but the world wept.

Now I have none with me, no attendant, no friends, no relations.

I churned the curds and took the pure butter, discarding the rest.

Mira is now the servant of dear Giridhar, whatever happens.

Forsake me not, my king;

I am a poor helpless woman, oh Gossain, without any strength, you are the crown of my head.

Worthless I am without a single virtue and you are great in everything good.

I am your slave, to whom else am I to go (for help)? You are the jewel of my heart.

Oh, Mira has no other Lord than you; it is for you to redeem her honour.

Take your stand before my eyes, dearest; stand before my eyes and forget me not.

The waves of life bear me adrift; make haste and pull me to the shore.

Oh Mira's Lord, dear Giridhar, let this union have no end.

For thee have I forsaken all pleasures, why dost thou
now keep me waiting?

The pain of separation burns in my heart, come and
quench it.

My Lord, it does not behove you to leave me thus;
come and smiling call me to thy side.

☞ Oh my beloved, Mira is thy servant through ages;
come to her now and soothe her limbs with the touch of
thine.

Oh my friend, while the world sleeps I alone separated
from my beloved keep awake.

Separated from their beloved ones those in the harems
(palaces of pleasure) weave garlands of pearls; but here is
one who weaves a garland of tears.

My nights pass away counting the stars in the heaven.
When will the hour of happiness come?

Oh Mira's Lord, beloved Giridhar, leave me not after
you have once come to me.

My beloved must I see, oh friend. I shall live in him
meditating and dreaming about him.

I shall cling to thy feet. Thine every single footprint
shall be to me a place of constant pilgrimage.

Oh Mira's Lord, dear Giridhar, I shall take my shelter
at thy feet.

I shall dance before the Lord of my heart, and thrill
Him with my abandon and beg His love.

Love will be the ringing anklet round my flying feet,
and emotion will be the flowing garment round my swaying
figure.

I shall scatter to the four winds all restraints born
of high birth or social position.

I shall go straight into the arms of my beloved Lord.

Mira will be dyed with the dye of her own dear Hari.

Oh beloved, do come to my cottage. In thine absence
the world is a void.

Come, I offer my body and soul and all I have to
thee and sing thy praises.

Thou art all virtue, the very ocean of virtue and I
am a bundle of all that is evil, I am worthless without a
single virtue to my credit and thou art the repository of
all that is holy.

Oh Mira's Lord, when wilt thou come and meet me?
My heart aches without thee.

Oh sweet-tongued, come to the house of your own
Mira. How long shall she wait — wait and look expect-
ant on the way? It is the time that you were come.

Oh come to me with a lightsome heart, you need
have no misgivings. Your very presence will breathe
happiness all round. And I will dedicate this body and
soul to you, to my beloved Shyam.

I am distressed and can brook no further delay.
Come and your presence will be the consummation of my
desires.

For you I have sacrificed every luxury. Kazal, Tilak
and Tambula, I have given up all.

In your absence time drags on heavily. I wait and
wait, my head resting wearily against the palm of my hand.

Come! Mira, your servant for ages and ages, bares
her bosom for you.

Oh friend of my life and death, day and night I remember thee.

Time hangs heavily in thine absence and my heart is a witness to it.

High from the palace tower I gaze on thy way, my eyes are red with tears.

Vain is this world and vain my pride of birth and vain, very vain are my relations and all, all besides.

Oh listen, with folded hands I supplicate thee; oh Mira's Lord, Giridhar, her heart is enamoured of the lotus-feet of Hari and every moment she is entranced with the blissful sight of thy beauty.

Dearest, come and reveal yourself to me. Life is unbearable in your absence.

Without you, my love, I am like a lotus without water and like a night without the moon.

I wander night and day in anxious suspense and the fire of separation is corroding me away. The day finds me without hunger and night without sleep and my lips are silent, yes, indeed, I cannot utter a single word.

Come and meet me and cool this fire.

You, who see into the very heart of things, why pain me any more? ah, my husband dear, come for pity's sake, oh come. Mira, your servant for ages and ages, is at your feet.

Come to my house, oh my beloved; I am thine and thou art mine. Thine as I am, I watch thy way and gaze wistfully on the road.

Past is the appointed hour, but thou art not come; another love must have kept thee away.

Mira says, oh Lord, when shalt thou come? Time hangs heavily without thee.

—Ah my friend, I am mad with love; no one knows how I suffer.

My bed is a bed of thorns; how shall I sleep then?
The bed of my beloved is on the firmament, how then can we be united?

The sufferer alone and not one who has never suffered knows what it is to suffer. Only he who has tasted the poison knows its bitterness; others do not.

Goaded by suffering I wander about from forest to forest but the physician I fail to find.

Oh Mira's Lord, then alone shall I get relief when Shyam will be my physician.

See, my friend, how Hari has torn my heart asunder!

He promised to come back but there is no trace of him yet.

I have no hunger and thirst left in me, I have lost my senses. How then can I live?

You steal my heart and then you forget to keep your promise.

Oh Mira's Lord, oh, beloved Giridhar, your absence breaks my heart.

My Lord, you tied the knot of love and now where
are you fled?

You kindled the lamp of love and now you are gone
away forsaking her who knows naught but you.

You launched the boat of love and now you leave it
to drift in a sea of separation.

Oh Mira's Lord, when will you come back? I cannot
live without you any longer.

The beauty of Mohan has taken me captive.

In the bazaar and on the way he teases me. I have not learnt the sweet desire of my beloved.

He has a beautiful figure, and his eyes are like the lotus. His glance is thrilling and engaging are his smiles.

Near the bank of Jamuna he is grazing the cows and sings a sweet song to the flute.

I surrender myself body and soul to Giridhar; Mira clasps his lotus-feet.*

* Here Mirabai uses the usual Vaishnava imagery and speaks for Radha, the beloved of Krishna.

Tell me, oh astrologer, when shall I meet my beloved
Rama.

I tell you astrologer, if I meet him, I shall bedeck
thy book with diamonds; but, aye, if I don't, may thy book
rot in dust.

Ah the Lord of Mira, my Giridhar, to see you is my
only joy.

My friend, I will write a letter to my beloved Rama.

My every secret sorrow he knows aright; but still he
will never care to send a message.

From the tower on high I watch his way. My eyes
are red with weeping.

Oh dear, in thy absence time hangs heavily, my heart
is rent in twain.

Oh Mira's Lord, oh the companion of my previous
life, when wilt thou come back?

How shall I write the letter; write I can't.

My hand shakes as I take the pen and my heart surges up in my breast.

Words struggle for utterance, but they fail and tears swell in my eyes.

How shall I reach the lotus-feet (of my Lord) when all my limbs tremble and shiver?

Oh my beloved Giridhar, the Lord of Mira, at thy feet I lay down my burden of sorrows.

My friends, some one of you go to my beloved and tell him this for me.

Listen, listen my beloved, to this humble prayer of mine.

You stole away my heart, but now you are playing with others. I have none else but you. You are my soul's refuge.

You went away promising to come back and still you do not. The long day is drawing to its close.

Oh Lord of Mira, with folded hands I implore you. Tell me, oh tell me, when you will come back.

Sleep does not come to me in the absence of my beloved. My eyes are wide open, my heart rings with the pain of separation and the fire of love is consuming me.

This bright temple is dark without the glory of my beloved, no other lamp may brighten it.

Without him my bed seems lonely. The world also is keeping the night awake and expectant. When will the beloved come home?

The frog, the peacock and the papia all join in chorus, and the cuckoo bursts into music. Rain-swollen clouds gather on all sides. Lightning flashes and strikes terror all round. My eyes liberate their tears.

Oh my dear companion, what shall I do, where shall I go, who can quench the fire of suffering in me? The serpent of separation has bitten me and the poison is eating into my vitals; who is there to give me medicine?

Ah friend, is there none of my own, who can bring my beloved and unite me with him?

Oh Lord of Mira, when will you come to me? You have robbed my heart. When will you come and smiling speak unto me?

My eyes are sore without a sight of you. There has been no peace for me, oh Lord, ever since you left me.

My heart thrills at every sound (as if it were a signal for your coming footstep) and my eyes are rivetted on your way; but weary waiting lengthens a single night into full half a year.

To whom can I fully express the pangs of separation?
It is cutting like a saw into my heart.

Oh Mira's Lord, when will you come — to give me bliss and to put my sorrows to flight?

✓ Ah my friend, I have lost my sleep. The night passes into the dawn as I keep watching the way for my beloved.

My friends come and try to console me but my mind knows no consolation.

Time hangs heavily without him. I am growing leaner and leaner; only the name of my beloved sounds on my lips.

My beloved knows not the pangs of suffering that I feel.

As the lark desires the cloud, the fish the water, so my heart desires union with the Lord.

Mira has, in the intense anxiety of her separation, lost her senses.

My beloved is angry with me, oh my dear sisters,
he is angry with me. I have looked for him in the village
squares and in the bazaars. I looked again and again at the
courtyard. With lamp in hand I searched for him in every
house and searching I wept bitterly.

Ab Giradhar, Lord of Mira, she sings your virtues
and clasps your lotus-feet.

The Holi (spring festival) has no charm for me without my beloved.

The house and the lawn seem dreary without his presence. Why shall I burn the lamps, ah my dear, when my beloved is abroad?

The vacant bed feels like a draught of poison which sucks my life blood out of me; sleep, oh, that is impossible.

How long, oh how long, have I been standing keeping watch over the way! and night and day the pangs of separation wring for ever more.

My heart is wild with sorrow and words fill my lips; what shall I say? Oh! when will the beloved one come?

Is there no kindly soul to bring me immediate news of him?

Oh! how far is the time when my beloved with a smile will call me near him and we shall sing the Holi (Songs of the Spring festival) together?

My beloved Giridhar, how shall I convince thee? This love of mine (for thee) I have inherited from my former birth and now I cannot help it.

My heart wells up at the sight of thy beautiful face.

Come now to my house, oh my beloved Giridhar; the women will welcome thee with songs and I shall decorate the floor with pearls. And I shall dedicate my body and soul to thee.

Remember, my beloved, this love of mine, this my relation with thee is age-long.

Says Mira, oh thou beloved of the gopis, why refuse to come to me.

Thy servant clings to thy feet, delay not even for a moment.

Mother dear, the delight of my heart is delaying.

Heavy down-pours fall all around. Thunder rumbles everywhere and all the lightnings of the sky burst out flashing. Clouds gather from all quarters and the eastern wind with rain blows ceaselessly.

My heart burns in the separation from you; come, my beloved, and sprinkling your love, save this withering creeper.

Appear, appear, oh Lord, while there is yet some life left in me and give my soul a resting place at your feet.

The Sravana clouds pour forth their rains and my heart is filled with their solemn music.

My soul is expectant and I hear the footstep of Hari.

Dark and dismal clouds gather on all sides and the lightning flashes. Storm is approaching. There is a drizzling, halting rain and the cool breeze blows like a caressing touch.

It is Giridhar, the beloved Lord of Mira, singing a hymn, joyous and holy.

I hear the footsteps of Hari. From the parapet of the palace I look out when my king will come.

The frogs, the papia and the peacock are crying in delight and the cuckoo has decked herself (in anticipation of the happy day). Overhanging clouds are pouring down showers and the lightning has left her bashfulness (just as on the approach of the beloved the girls leaving aside their bashfulness peep out of the dark windows).

The earth has decked herself in a new garment to meet her Lord.

Oh dear Giridhar, oh Mira's beloved and king, come quick and be united with thy servant.

The charm of thy face has made me captive, my beloved. When once I saw that face the whole world lost its charm for me and my mind remained no longer attached to it.

To go for the pleasures of this world is like trying to hold water in a sieve. I can now disdain those.

Lucky is Mira; her hopes have come true. Now am I the most fortunate of all.

Oh beloved, how can I express myself fully to thee. I was born with this love for thee; how can I quench it now?

Looking at thy face, oh dear, my love is born anew.

Come now to my cottage, oh Giridhar; the girls will sing sweet songs at thy approach and I will dedicate my body and soul to thee.

Oh my dear Shyam, my love for thee runs through countless lives and deaths.

Mira says, oh beloved of the gopis, I have become a bramacharini; and I, thy servant, have taken absolute refuge at thy feet. Tarry no more.

It is raining outside and my beloved is with me in my cottage.

Light showers are falling and my cup of bliss is full to the brim.

It is a union after age-long separation, and I am afraid of losing my beloved every moment.

Says Mira, "My Lord, you have satisfied my great thirst for love and have accepted me, oh my husband of former births."

Mother dear, I have found a treasure in Rama, a
veritable treasure indeed, oh mother.

No amount of spending will make this treasure less,
thieves can't steal it; it grows and grows every day.

It sinks not in water nor is it burnt by fire.

Compared with it, the earth itself seems all too small.

Like a boat, devotion has carried me across the ocean
of life. It is to me the light that shows the way.

At the lotus-feet of her beloved Giridhar Mirabai has
placed her heart.

Take away thy staff and thy blanket, oh mother,
I am no longer going to take the cows to pasture.

To Balabhadra you gave the butter and to me the
buttermilk only.

The stones on the streets of Brindaban hurt my feet
(and thou, my mother, hast no consolation for me).

Oh Giridhar, oh Lord of Mira, she sings your virtues
and clasps your lotus feet.*

* written in the usual Vaishnava imagery of Krishna addressing his mother.

I, a woman, have a vast estate; true jewels are my portion.

I fashion my nose-ring of Vitthal, and the wreath of Hari is on my heart.

My thoughts are a string of pearls and my bangles are Vishnu.

Why should I go to a goldsmith (for ornaments when I have them all)? My fetters are the Lord of life, Krishna my gold and silver anklets. My silver ornaments are Rama and Narayana. My anvat is the one who discerns the heart.

Let me now make Purushottama my casket and Trikam the name of the pad-lock. Let me make the key of compassion, and joy, and in that casket let me keep my jewels.

Beloved, I have dyed myself with the dye of thy love.

The beloved of others live abroad and so they send letters to them, but my beloved lives within my heart and with him I am day and night.

Dressed in beautiful garments I go out to play with my beloved. In play I meet him and I hold him to me.

Others get drunk by drinking wine but I get drunk without that. I drink of the wine of love and intoxicated I go about day and night.

I have lighted the lamp of constant remembrance and my mind is the wick (which burns). The oil comes from the unknowable mill and the lamp burns ever and ever.

Giridhar is the Lord of Mira and she is the servant of his feet.

Just as opium is dear to the opium-eater so is my beloved dear to me.

Some abuse him, others worship him, others are angry (because I love him); but my beloved has charmed me.

Kanah have I bought; the price he asked I paid.
Some cry "Too great" while others jeer "It was small."
I have paid in full, weighed to the utmost grain, my love,
my life, myself, my soul, my all.

65
Mother dear, I have bought my beloved.

Some say, "She stole him", others say, "She got him by begging"; but no, I took him openly with the beat of drums.

Some say, "He is dark", some say, "He is fair", but I took him with my eyes open.

Some say, "He is light", some say, "He is bulky", but I weighed him on my own scales ere I accepted.

All my ornaments from my body I took off to get him.

The Lord of Mira, beloved Giridhar, is her eternal mate.

You may break the tie, my beloved, but I can't.
Whom else may I befriend if I tear away the bond of
your love?

You are the tree and I a bird, you are the lake and
I am merely a fish in it; you are the mountain great on
which I stand as a plant.

You are the moon and I am the chakora, and you,
oh Lord, are the pearl and I am the thread through it.
You are gold and I am like the borax.

Oh Lord of Mira, jeweller of Vraja, you are my Lord,
I am your servant.

PRONUNCIATION
OF INDIAN NAMES AND WORDS

'a' is generally short as in 'awe'; the exceptions and peculiarities are mentioned below. 'e' is like the 'e' in 'met' and 'i' like the 'i' in 'pin'; 'o' is short; 'u' is to be pronounced like 'u' in 'up'.

Mirabai - - - -	two a's are to be pronounced like long 'a' in 'alms'.
Nanak - - - -	first 'a' like the above.
Tulsidas - - - -	same; wherever the suffix 'das' occurs it is to be pronounced in the same way.
Dadu - - - -	long 'a'
Surdas - - - -	as above.
Maya - - - -	both the a's as above.
Ramanuja - - - -	the first two a's as above.
Vilasa - - - -	the first 'a' as above.
Rajputana - - - -	all the three a's as above.
Gujrat - - - -	as above.
Radha - - - -	as above.
Rajtarangini - - -	first 'a' as above.
Rao, Rana - - -	a's as above.
Merta, Mewar - -	as above.
Dudaji, Jodhaji -	'a' as above.
Sanga - - - -	second 'a' as above.
Durga - - - -	'a' as above.
Charanamrita - -	third 'a' as above.
Brindaban - - -	first 'a' as above.
Goevami - - - -	as above.
Raidas - - - -	second 'a' as above.
Dwarka - - - -	second 'a' as above.
Narayana - - - -	the first two a's as above.
Shyam - - - - -	as above.
Sitar - - - - -	as above.
Sadhu - - - - -	as above.
Papia - - - - -	as above.

20th August 1966 Tel C

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

Mira has addressed her God under the following names:

GIRIDHAR	lit. the holder of mountains.
GOPALA	cowherd; also Lord of the world.
GOSSAIN	lit. Lord of the world.
HARI	the usual synonym for God.
KRISHNA or KANAH or KANAHIYA	(the latter two being derived from the first) the dark complexioned one.
MADAN GOPAL	the Lord of Love or Devotion, a synonym for Krishna.
MOHAN	lit. charming.
NARAYANA	the Supreme Spirit or the Original Man, a synonym for God.
PURUSHOTTAMA	the Supreme being.
RAGHUVAR	the name of Rama.
RAMA	the hero of the Ramayana and the term used for God by the Ramavats (a particular sect of Vaishnavism).
SHYAM or SAMBARIA	the well-known appellation for Krishna for his dark complexion.
TRIKAM	common appellation of Vishnu in Maharashtra.
VISHNU	from this comes the word Vaishnavism, the religion of devotion centering round God conceived as Vishnu.
VITTHAL	Vishnu as worshipped in Maharashtra.

ANVAT	- - - - -	a silver ornament worn on the great toe.
BALABHADRA	- - - -	the brother of Krishna; the first part of the poem describes an episode in the life of the child Krishna and the words are addressed by him to his mother Yashoda.
BHAKTA	- - - - -	devotee.
BRAHMACHARINI	-	a woman who observes the vow of chastity and piety.
BRINDABAN	- - - -	the place where Krishna lived as a cowherd; still a sacred place for the Vaishnavas.
CHAKORA	- - - - -	the Indian lark.
GOPIS	- - - - -	the beloved women of Krishna in the Vaishnava legends.
JAMUNA	- - - - -	the famous Indian river on the banks of which Krishna played his eternal play.
KASHI	- - - - -	the Hindu name for Benares, the sacred place of pilgrimage.
KAZAL, TILAK		
TAMBULA	- - - - -	different articles of toilet for adorning the body, used by the Indian ladies.
MANTRAS	- - - - -	sacred words, charms.
PAPIA	- - - - -	the Indian nightingale; her cry is said to be 'pew' 'pew' i. e. 'my beloved, oh my beloved'; the imagery given here is much favoured by the Indian poets.
RANA	- - - - -	prince.
SADHUS	- - - - -	ascetics and saints.
SANNYASI	- - - - -	ascetic who has left the world for meditation.

SITAR	- - - - -	a stringed musical instrument to the accompaniment of which hymns and songs are sung.
SRAVANA-BHADRA	-	July—August, the months of the rain in India.
TILAK	- - - - -	signs painted on the body of the devotees.
TULSI	- - - - -	a plant, the leaves of which are considered to be favourites of Vishnu's.
UDASHI	- - - - -	a mendicant who has lost desire.
VEDAS	- - - - -	the sacred books of the Hindus.
VRAJA	- - - - -	the land where Krishna is said to have lived as a cowherd. It includes Brindaban.
YOGI	- - - - -	ascetic given to meditation.

I loved a girl, she loved me for some time but changed then and we went in the night : 8

